

## Official: Increased Power For Provosts

In an official statement made on the steps of the Authority Chambers, Mayor Hardgadley announced a further extension of the powers of stop and search for the Provosts. Provosts will now be at liberty to stop and detain any individual they suspect of being involved in felonious acts. The burden of proof will be transferred to the detainee, in that they must prove to the officers satisfaction that they are not guilty of any crime.

Mayor Hardgadley stated: "Honest citizens have nothing to fear from these new powers. It is merely a reaction to alarming rise in the carrying of firearms within the boundaries of the TCMA. This move should not infringe the civil liberties of our good citizens in any way."

Noted Provost Commander Illiyan Japarov commented: "This is a positive move by the Mayor, and I

applaud him for it. This will enable us to carry out our public duties even more effectively."

Reaction on the streets has been mixed, with the most vocal opposition coming from poorer areas, where Provost brutality and corruption is rumoured to be rife. No one this correspondent spoke to was willing to make a statement.

## Illegal Race Causes Chaos

Illegal ekranoplan racing again brought violence and destruction to the Three Canals Metropolitan Area. A five ship race starting and ending the Fallendredge Turning Basin turned in to a orgy of violence. All but one of the craft crashed, causing thousands of pounds worth of damage to local property and killing or injuring many bystanders.

There were a number of violent incidents surrounding the race, including a substantial civil disturbance where several scores of race watchers clashed with fists, knives and clubs.

Provosts arrived too late to stop the race but many arrests were made in the aftermath.

## Fights "Unpopular" Says Man In The Street

The increased use of Mire End for the staging of underground cripplecut contests is making lives a misery, according to our sources.

Organised crime groups, whom we dare not name for fear of reprisals, are thought to be behind the upsurge in this activity.

The disused Shale Hall, overlooking Redberry Park, has become a favoured venue for the fights.

A recent fight, at which a reported twenty individuals were killed or seriously injured, attracted a reported two hundred spectators.

TCMAA Provosts have declined to take any action, as Mire End is out of their jurisdiction.

A local man stated that the organised fights were "Unpopular". Another source described the activity as "Shite!".

## Mire End Rail Line "May Re-open"

This correspondent has discovered that the Ancient & Honourable Guild Of Fulgurators may be considering re-opening the disused Mire End Branch Line. Abandoned for over a century, the railbed has become home to many hundreds of families.

The Guild are said to be considering re-opening the line to provide a direct link between the TCMA and the south-eastern areas of The City.

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## from the grounds

Well, there's a few things to talk about this issue.

### it's alive (almost)!

We now have proof copies of a/state in our grubby little hands and the finished item is due to be sent to the printers shortly. We realise it's been a long wait, with many delays, but we hope that you understand we're trying to produce the best product possible for your money. We do believe that a/state is a great game, packed full of background, detail, mystery and adventure. Believe us, it'll be worth the wait.

### out & about

We recently attended the Compulsion 2003 games convention in Edinburgh and a great time was had by all. Demos of a/state and Mob Justice were ran to the general enjoyment of all who played. Sorry to those who couldn't play in the two a/state demos, as they were somewhat oversubscribed (which, from our point of view, was very encouraging).

Thanks to Catharina Marcus who bought the proof copy of a/state in the Grand Charity Auction and to Bob (it's Bob!) who bought the poster art board in the same auction. And thanks also to the organisers, staff and attendees who made the con such a great success.

We'll be attending some more cons over the upcoming year, including DrakCon in Aberdeen, Ubercon in Cork and Gaelcon in Dublin. Our business manager John will also be at GenCon UK this year spreading the good word and giving it some chat.

### submissions

In this issue of the Mire End Tribune, you'll find a lengthy article on the sport of cripplecut. The article was written by a/state forum member/contributor Ed

Arrowsmith. Thanks to Ed for taking the time to write something and submit it to us. If anyone else out there would like to submit anything for the 'Tribune', just get in contact with us at:

**info@contestedground.co.uk**

## the reading list

The Reading List highlights any books, films, comics or CDs that CGS staff have been particularly impressed by in recent months.

### malcolm

#### Books:

**'Light'** (novel) by M John Harrison, **'Survivor'** (novel) by Chuck Palahnuik, **'The Bell Jar'** (novel) by Sylvia Plath, **'Dave Barry Is Not Taking This Sitting Down'** (non-fiction) by Dave Barry.

#### Music:

**'Brotherhood of the Bomb'** by Techno Animal, **'Best of The Divine Comedy'** by The Divine Comedy, **'Anthology, the best of'** by A Tribe Called Quest, **'Cold Water Music'** by Aim.

### paul

#### Books:

**'The Nameless'** (novel) by Ramsey Campbell, **'Ghost Soldiers'** (novel) by Hampton Sides.

#### Music:

**'Launch'** by The Beatsteaks, **'A Flight And A Crash'** by Hot Water Music, **'Live At The Roxy'** by Social Distortion.

### john

#### Books:

**'The Two Georges'** (novel) by Richard Dreyfuss and Harry Turtledove.

#### Music:

**'The Main Event'** by Fingathing, **'OSC:DIS'** by The Mad Capsule Markets.

### lain

#### Books:

**'Gangland'** (novel) by Lands Morton.

#### Music:

lain has given up music and auditory entertainment of any kind for Lent.

## for your viewing pleasure

### project deepcode (part 1)

By Malcolm Craig

The world of the Dataflow is a mystery to the vast majority of people in The City. It is another world, a world of impenetrable code, encryptions, communications and data. Only the flowghosts truly understand the Dataflow, delving into its depths and cracking open ancient caches of data. Yet, there are deeper mysteries to the Dataflow which even most flowghosts don't claim to understand.

One of these mysteries, something of a talisman for the flowghosts, is the deep code. Deep code is something which has never been identified, never tracked down and even now remains something of an urban legend. In essence, deep code is what the flowghosts think makes the Dataflow work. Some of the best minds in The City have explicitly stated that the Dataflow shouldn't be able to operate at all. Yet it does. The big question is: how? The only reasonable answer put forward so far is deep code, some ancient, fundamental level of information upon which the entire teetering edifice of the Dataflow is perched. The lifetime ambition of many in the 'flow community to track down and identify elements of the deep code, hopefully leading to some quasi-mystical understanding of the vast network.

There are many projects to find the deep code currently extant in The City.

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The largest and best organised one is Project DeepCode, a huge attempt organised by a disparate group of flowghosts, software companies and various other interests. Unlike the macrocorps, who seem to take little interest in the theory of deep code, it is small, diverse interests, such as Project DeepCode, who take an interest. Hundreds of flowghosts, working a cellars, garretts and warehouses, sifting through huge quantities of chaotic data, attempting to decipher ancient cyphers and figure out the meaning of symbols whose significance has been lost in the mists of time.

The following adventure nugget serves to introduce the players to the concept of deep code and disparate interests who are attempting to tap its mysteries...

High in an attic in Folly Hills lives Juliane Cholmondeley (pronounced 'Chumley'), an inept and somewhat half-arsed flowghost of no great repute. From his tiny, dusty loft space, his signals flash out through corroded wires into the Dataflow, curling through the local exchanges and switchhouses, out into the rest of The City. His ancient, battered macroscale dingin clanks and grinds away, powered by a reeking fishoil engine crudely wired up to a sparking, arcing dynamo. This is not the picture of a man who has gone anywhere along his chosen career path. Until now.

Cholmondeley has been a very low level member of Project DeepCode for a few years now, doing minor tasks and decoding fairly insignificant pieces of data. He also sets up trawls, often taking days at a time, for interesting deep code fragments in the main corpus of the Dataflow. It was on

one of these trawls that his dingin dredged up and stored something that may be significant. All the markers indicate that it's a pretty old bit of data, at least a couple of centuries, perhaps even older. Trouble is, he doesn't really know what to do with it. Or how to crack it. Hence, he contacts his friends, the PCs. Lucky them.

If any of the players have a flowghost contact, Cholmondeley could be it. Or

eyebrows. So far so bad. He'll outline the situation and basically indicate that he'll pay the players £20 each (a pretty amazing sum by his standards) to find a crack for his encrypted data. Written in a crabbed style on a stained piece of paper are the following words:

*"Stahlbruder Ingage - not in use fr.  
approx. 150yrs?  
Posbly held Cathedral / Longshr?  
Arkives?"*



In essence, what Cholmondeley wants is for the players to find the code he needs to get at the data held within the fragment he's dredged up. Being a socially awkward misfit, he has (rather sensibly) decided that perhaps he isn't best suited to face-to-face investigative work.

Although the upfront money being offered isn't too great, the players should realise that this could be a potentially lucrative little deal. Faced with the task of finding a 150 year old computer code, the PCs will have to rely on their wits and intelligence, rather than brute force and ignorance. However...

No sooner has Cholmondeley handed over his little note,

he could just be an old friend, casual acquaintance or perhaps they bumped in to him on a pervious adventure. He now needs help. Inviting the players to meet him in what he considers an inconspicuous location (Platform 1 of Folly Hills Central train station), he'll appraise them of the situation. He asks to be met late at night, at the 22nd hour. He won't be immediately recogniseable, as he's purchased some doghair and fashioned a monumentally unconvincing false beard and bushy

than a group of men and women will appear from the dimly lit stairwell leading to the station entrance. The number of people in the group will be at least one more than the PCs. They are shabbily dressed in common working mans clothes and are carrying dogskin bags of varying sizes. Emphasise the angular shapes that appear to be contained within the bags and the occasional metallic 'clink' emanating from them. Cholmondeley will immediately take fright and start babbling to the PCs

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about "sinister, dark forces who may be after his secret!". The approaching group will step into the light of the platform just as a northbound train is pulling into the platform. Cholmondeley will beg the PCs to get on the train with him, as the "dark forces" will kill any and all people he's been seen talking to.

If the players get on the train, they will soon realise that they don't have anything more than platform tickets. Ooo er! The Transit Militia do not take kindly to fare dodgers. Concentrate the players minds by letting them know this. It is, after all, common knowledge that the Transit Militia hates fare dodgers and will shoot those who run. Observant PCs will have noticed that the dodgy looking bunch have got on to the last carriage of the train and are now advancing through the swaying, creaking carriages. Advancing from the other end is a pair of Transit Militiamen clad in their distinctive rough grey overcoats, peaked caps and brass badges of authority. The train is still a couple of minutes from the next stop (Coppertop Lane Halt), so the PCs will have to think fast. Cholmondeley is well and truly panicing now, but not for the reasons the PCs might think he is.

In fact the group of shady types are thugs hired by a local bookie to whom Cholmondeley owes a rather substantial sum of money (£150 to be precise). Cholmondeley is now worried that the PCs will go berserk when they find out there aren't any "dark forces" at work. Or are there? Also observing Cholmondeley are a couple of flowghosts with a deep and abiding interest in the deep code. Aware that he might have dredged up something of importance, they've been attempting to pin him down for a quiet chat. Given his paranoia and lack of social interaction, this is proving harder than they thought. These flowghosts arrived at the station just as the train was pulling out with

Cholmondeley, the PCs and the bookies thugs on board. All things being equal, the Transit Militia and the thugs should enter the carriage toe PCs are in at the same time, but from opposite ends. It's left up to the GMs discretion as to how the group gets out of this rather sticky situation. There are a few possibilities:

**1) To the windows!** The group decides to make a daring escape either onto the roof or the outside of the carriage. This is fraught with danger, as the train whips between leaning tenements, clips low-lying power cables and is dowsed with water (and other, far less palatable, liquids) from outfall pipes hanging over the track. Falling off would result in severely broken bones at the very least, as the poor unfortunate cannons off the many hard surfaces which so inconveniently surround the railway line.

**2) Create a scene!** If any of the PCs are confident enough, they could try tipping the wink to the Transit Militia and implying that the thugs (a fairly disreputable looking bunch. But then again, the PCs are probably the same) do not have tickets. How the Militia react depends on how the players play this. If they are snivelling and obsequious, then the Militia is more likely to check their tickets first and arrest them for not paying the fare. If they are pompous and arrogant, the Militia will do the same as previously mentioned, but also give them a bit of a kicking as well. If, however, the PCs seem well-heeled and moneyed, the Militia will most likely show them respect (for their perceived higher social status) and do exactly what they want by arresting the thugs.

**3) Start a fight!** More martially inclined players may choose to take on both the thugs and the Transit Militia. This is an astoundingly bad idea, especially where the Militia are concerned. Injuring or, Gods forbid, killing a Militiaman is a really, really bad thing

to do. In addition, the thugs, who previously only saw the players as a mild impediment on the way to getting Cholmondeley will become more solid enemies. Oh dear.

Then, of course, there are the plans which the players will actually come up with.

Arrest by the Transit Militia will result in being banged up for the night in the slimy, stinking cells underneath the next station (which happens to be Coppertop Lane Halt). Substantial fines of at least £10 each will be levied and grainy sepia tone photographs will be taken of the PCs and wired to CrossBar Terminus to be added to the ever expanding file of known offenders.

Meanwhile, the two flowghosts will be watching the proceeding from a neighbouring carriage with grim amusement. However the players manage to wriggle out of the situation, the flowghosts will discretely follow them. The players may well find their anger turning towards Cholmondeley, who is now in a state of utter panic. Just what exactly is going on? What is the significance of the data? And why does this always happen to us?

**To be continued in Part 2 in the next issue of The Mire End Tribune.**

Special Report:

a cripplecut fight

by Ed Arrowsmith

"The highlight of last weeks sporting events was undoubtedly the cripplecut tournament held at Mire End's run-down, decrepit and partially flooded Shale Hall. The event was promoted by local personality Andy Mickay. Mickay's campaign to legitimize the sport in the Three Canals area is well known, and this event was staged with

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his usual mix of showmanship and cynicism. The tournament itself was pretty exciting, but the best match of the night was easily a junior-heavyweight bout between Kyle Oshay of the Outlaws stable and a young newcomer named Jason Ward who we haven't seen before in Mire End. He was announced as being from Fogwarren, though he looked pretty well fed so I figure he's been fed up somewhere else. He has a great build for a knife fighter, though a little on the skinny side even for a junior. Oshay, as those who follow Mickay's fights will know is pushing the 220lbs limit for a junior. Heavy set, but quicker than he looks, on paper this should have been a pretty routine bout for Oshay and the crowd's reaction when the two fighters stepped out into the circle reflected this. To be honest I don't think anyone thought Ward stood a chance against the experienced Outlaw.

The fight opened with some cagey stuff as they felt each other out. Both guys used llikes so there was no reach advantage for either competitor weapons. Ward definitely seemed to have a speed advantage, but the early betting was heavily towards Oshay, as the fans wagered on the Outlaw's stamina and experience to wear the newcomer down.

Oshay got first blood, catching Ward on his inner forearm with a feint underhand switch, suckering Ward in and using all his speed. It should have been a crippling blow, and many of the crowd thought the fight was over there and then, but Ward showed some incredible speed of his own, whipping his arm back and round. It looked like this had thrown him off balance and Oshay slid back to take a clean shot but Ward had suckered him and he caught a stiff spinning kick to the side of his head as the crowd gasped in stunned awe. Oshay was visibly staggered but just got his llike up to deflect

Ward's thrust so it only opened up a nasty gash on his thigh rather than laying the front of his leg wide open.

Oshay tried to create some space, probably looking to slow the pace a bit but Ward wasn't having any of it and kept on him, trying to get a good shot on Oshay's knife arm. Oshay got his balance back quickly and got away with only a couple of minor cuts on his shoulder and tried again to get space then switched, rolling forward to cut at Ward's hamstring. It's one of Oshay's classics, he's won more bouts with that than any other move but this time he came up empty. Ward had it well scouted and as Oshay's strike came around he dropped onto the bigger man's arm, pinning it, and struck like lightning, cutting Oshay under the shoulder and cleanly crippling his right arm. Oshay's llike scattered across the floor, but the Outlaw's experience showed as he almost calmly punched Ward in the face with his left, grabbed his throat and rolled, looking for a mount and trying to pin Ward's knife. He got a knee over Ward's forearm but couldn't get the mount properly with his arm disabled or hook his knife back. Ward was using his knees, trying to get Oshay's knee on his arm but he couldn't get the leverage to do enough damage. Oshay tried for an FU elbow and got it, opening up a cut over Ward's eye but without his right to brace he collapsed, giving Ward the chance to roll through. He didn't quite make it though because Oshay got his weight back across but not enough to pin the knife so he did the smart thing and rolled clear, finally getting space he'd wanted and scooping up his fallen llike. Ward skipped up, and the crowd howled their appreciation for the fighters as they started to circle each other slowly.

Ward closed first, drawing a vicious snap-kick from Oshay that he tried to block with his weapon but Oshay was

feinting and the switch kick caught him on the knee, staggering him and as Ward shot out his right to steady himself Oshay lashed out, opening Ward's bicep from top to bottom. The crowd shouted in anticipation as they saw Ward's hand was empty and Oshay grinned suddenly as he caught it too but the llike wasn't on the ground. Ward had switched and sacrificed his arm to open Oshay and he hooked his llike through Oshay's Achilles tendon. Oshay tapped. What else could he do? The apothecaries rushed in, followed swiftly by Mickay who raised Ward's hand in victory. Mind you they got Ward out pretty quickly once they'd stitched him up which was a smart move since several Hohler guys lost betting big on Oshay to win."

## faces in the crowd

andy mickay

by Ed Arrowsmith

<b>Age:</b>	32
<b>Height:</b>	5'11
<b>Weight:</b>	13st 4lbs
<b>Eyes:</b>	Green
<b>Hair:</b>	Receding, mainly black with plenty of grey
<b>Affiliations:</b>	Some links to the Hohler gang

Considered (with considerable justification) to be a loud, obnoxious jerk by many who know him, Andy Mickay is nonetheless an excellent promoter with a real flair for the mix of showmanship and bloody violence that draws the crowds and makes his cards some of the best attended in the TCMA. Growing up in Mire End Mickay was never a tough guy or a leader, but he was a popular kid in his own way. He was always coming up with things for his friends to do (if only to prevent them from getting bored and beating him up). From there to organising fist fights was a small step, and that soon led to

cripplecut. Mickay found he enjoyed the life. Getting to associate with dangerous types like ghostfighters and criminals was exciting for a guy who would otherwise have been lucky not to be cut up simply for looking at them. Eventually though it began to pale. Seeing the sort of people he could rub shoulders with if he was involved in ekranoplan racing he cast around for a way into that sport but he was stymied at every turn. Dejected, Mickay went back to cripplecut but his desire to improve his station still drove him. He started to save as much money as he could and using it to hire larger, more prestigious venues for his fights, trying to attract a better class of spectator. He's had a fair amount of success too.

Now if he could only persuade the Hohler gang to stop twisting his arm about fixing fights...

## Calliope Turnwise

by Malcolm Craig

**Age:** 49  
**Height:** 5' 9"  
**Weight:** 12st  
**Eyes:** Brown  
**Hair:** Greyish-black  
**Affiliations:** None

Much in demand by the well-heeled cognoscenti of the Three Canals Metropolitan Area, Calliope Turnwise is reknowned as a tailor of considerable artistry and artifice. She is adept at hiding the unsightly bulge, the awkward stoop or rotund behind. Turnwise learned her craft from her father, who was official suitmaker to the council of the TCMA. Upon his untimely death, Calliope imagined that she would have the honour of being the new official suitmaker bestowed upon her. Sadly, her hopes were dashed by the portly figure of Mayor Hardgadley. Somewhat reactionary and more than a little sexist in his views, Hardgadley

scoffed at the idea of a woman as the official suitmaker and appointed his ill-starred and somewhat moronic cousin to the post. Turnwise never forgave Hardgadley for this, viewing it as something of a blackening of her family name and a final insult to her dead father. Working from her shop in western Folly Hills ('Turnwise Tailors - We Cut The Cloth To Fit Your Pocket'), she makes everything from workers clothes right up to fine suits (for which she charges her wealthy clients ridiculous amounts).

A moderately plump woman of above average height, Calliope Turnwise can be stern, ribald or coquettish as the situation demands. Her small, deft hands can wield a pair of scissors with alarming dexterity (as one would-be burglar found out to his cost) and she always seems to be bustling, even when standing still. Her greying hair is tied back with a simple strip of black cloth and she peers at the world over a pair of round, wire-framed spectacles. Her clothing is unostentatious in the extreme; simply cut but very well made.

Calliope is well-connected, well-respected and extremely popular with her clientel, whether they be poor tradesmen looking for a new jacket or a toff from Coldbath Fell purchasing a bespoke suit. She is not without her enemies, however. Her animosity towards Mayor Hardgadley is well known, although not entirely without foundation.

## the Workshop

### Clothing

All but a few people in The City wear some form of clothing to protect themselves from the vagaries of the weather and environment. Few would actively choose to walk naked through the streets, odd glances being the least intim-

idating thing you would attract. Yet, what do people actually wear?

Clothing varies widely according to social status, wealth and personal taste. Most people with little or no income (i.e.: the vast majority of citizens) wear clothes which have been handed down through the generations, patched, darned and repaired so often that very little of the original garment is left. Any new clothing is likely to be rough and poorly made, although some who are lucky enough to have a regular income will have a suit of 'good' clothes for high days and holidays. Most workers will wear cheap boots or shoes made of badly tanned dogskin, a pair of roughly spun breeches or trousers, a shirt or vest of some kind and a heavy jacket or coat for warmth.

Those further up the social scale can afford slightly better quality garments, mass produced but of reasonable quality. Yet, there is still a lot of hand-me-down clothing about, even in the comfortable upper-middle classes. A good coat may be handed down from mother to daughter, carefully maintained and cared for. Skilled tradesmen, lower level professionals, businessmen and suchlike will quite often have suits made from spun dog hair or plant fibres. Tradesmen can often be found clad in heavy, multi-layered dogskin aprons to protect their clothing from the damaging effects of their work.



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It is only when you get to the level of the nomenclatura and the mid to upper level macrocorp citizen that truly extravagant, expensive and unnecessarily frivolous clothing begins to appear. People with this kind of wealth can afford almost any kind of clothing they want, either hand tailored from fine materials or mass-produced to very high standards in macrocorp factories. Artificial silks are common, created in reeking chemical plants. Dogs are bred to produce the finest quality pelts for spinning into yarns or adding as ornamentation. Their skins are also tanned to produce fine leathers for shoes, coats and jackets.

Some groups within The City have particular modes of dress which set them apart from the norm. For example, the members of the Ancient & Honourable Guild of Fulgurators wear thick, black, rubberised dogskin coats which stretch from their necks to the ground. This is complemented by their insulated gloves and dark goggles which protect them from the glare of electrical arcs. Members of the Third Syndicate crime organisation habitually dress in thickly padded coats made of rough grey yarn. TCMAA Provosts all wear a uniform made up of bluish grey jackets and trousers fashioned from rough yarn, peaked dogskin caps, black dogskin boots and black raincoats.

Below are some sample 'clothing kits' for a variety of occupations. The list is not exhaustive and GMs and players should feel free to come up with their own particular style for a given character.

### **Average working mans outfit**

Rough collarless shirt  
Waistcoat (optional)  
Heavyweight, baggy, rough trousers or rough, tight fitting breeches  
Braces or dogskin belt  
Jacket  
Vest  
Poor quality boots or shoes  
**Cost:** £2.14s

### **Middle-rank professionals outfit**

Thick, high collared shirt  
Doghair necktie  
Brocaded waistcoat  
Suit jacket and trousers (or skirt)  
Braces or belt  
Vest  
Average quality shoes  
Doghair coat  
**Cost:** £35.0s

### **High-level macrocorp managers outfit**

Fine artificial silk shirt  
Fine artificial silk necktie or bow-tie  
Suit made from finest doghair  
Very high quality doghair or dogskin coat  
High quality shoes  
**Cost:** £600 (minimum)

## the credits

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If you'd like to submit something to the Mire End Tribune, contact us at:  
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